Sādhana Pañcakaṃ: A Systematic Text for Aspirants of Spiritual Liberation

by

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Abbreviations

A.A	aparokṣānubhūti by śaṅkarācārya
A.G.	aṣṭāvakra gītā
A.P.	anubhutiprakasha by vidyāranya
A.U	aitareya upaniṣad
B.G.	bhagavad gītā
B.G.B.	bhagavad gītā bhāṣya by śaṅkarācārya
B.G.M.	bhaja govindam by śaṅkarācārya
B.S.B.	brahma sūtra bhāṣya by śaṅkarācārya
B.U.B.	brhadāranyaka upaniṣad bhāṣya by śaṅkarācārya
C.U	chāndogya upaniṣad
C.U.B.	chāndogya upaniṣad bhāṣya by śaṅkarācārya
D.D.V.	dṛg dṛśya viveka by śaṅkarācārya
H.Y.P.	haṭha yoga pradīpikā by svātmārāma
J.V	jīvanmuktiviveka by by vidyāranya
K.U.	kaṭha upaniṣad
K.U.B.	kaṭha upaniṣad bhāṣya by śaṅkarācārya
M.K.	māṇḍukya kārikā by Gauḍapāda
M.S.	manu smrti
M.U.	munḍaka upaniṣad
N.S.	naiṣkarmya siddhi by sureśvara
N.Sh.	nirvāna ṣatkam by śaṅkarācārya
N.U.	nāradaparivrājaka upaniṣad
P.	pañcadaśi by vidyāranya
S.S.	śiva samhitā
S.V.S.S.S	sarva vedānta siddhānta sārasaṅgraha by śaṅkarācārya
T.B	tattva bodha by śaṅkarācārya

V.C	vivekacūḍāmani by śaṅkarācārya
V.D.	vedānta ḍinḍima by śaṅkarācārya
V.P.	viṣnu purāna
V.S.	vedāntasāra by sadānanda
V.Sh.	vairāgya śatakam by bhartrhari
U.S.	upadeśasāhasri by śaṅkarācārya
Y.S.	yoga sūtra by patanjali

Preface

hariḥ om
śri gurubhyo namaḥ

I first encountered Sādhana Pañcakaṃ in the year 1999 when I learned it from my spiritual teacher, śri Swami Satprakashananda Saraswati. It was conducted once a week at my residence over a period of three months. That was the first text that I learned from my teacher. At that time I found the text to be systematic and very relevant to my spiritual pursuit. However, being my first foray into traditional textual study, I got lost in its message and did not completely understand from the third verse onwards. I attribute that to my ignorance at the early stages of my study of Vedānta. Years later with more exposure and study of Vedānta, I gained greater clarity to what the text was teaching and found it the most brief yet comprehensive and systematic Vedānta text. Since then, I always wanted to write a proper book on this text as a reflection of my appreciation for this text and Vedānta. This thesis has finally provided me this opportunity to fulfil my long time desire to write this.

I would like to thank my teacher, śri Swami Satprakashananda Saraswati for teaching and introducing me to this text and for showering me with his grace, compassion and for always inspiring me in his commitment to the Vedantic tradition. More than that he had shared with me the intricacies of Self-knowledge that has enabled me to do my Jñāna Sādhana effectively.

My sincere thanks goes to Prof. Narada Kush for allowing me to do write this commentary as my thesis and for being so accommodating. My gratitude to him for the guidance extended to me for the past 13 months in appreciating Vedic wisdom from a very meaningfully different perspective.

Chapter 1
Introduction

Sādhana Pañcakaṃ is a Vedānta treatise attributed to one of the key teachers of Vedānta, Śaṅkaracarya (Śaṅkara). Among the numerous texts authored by Śaṅkara, Sādhana Pañcakaṃ is a less popular one. This brief text aims to present the spiritual practices aimed at the goal of Vedānta, which is Liberation or Mokṣa. These practices have been encapsulated in five pithy verses. Vedānta is a school of thought that is entirely based on the final section of the Vedas, called the Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣads teach that Liberation can only had by knowing the Self to be God, Brahman. Sādhana Pañcakaṃ keeps its vision very clear by presenting the vision of the Upaniṣads in a step by step fashion.

Only a few commentaries of the text are available in print as it has been mostly taught orally in the current Vedānta tradition. As a result, more often than not the academic perspectives of the text are neglected or sidestepped due to it being targeted at sincere and serious aspirants of Vedānta.

The current essay examines each of the verse and its relevance to seekers of Mokṣa in the modern day with appropriate support from both Vedānta literature and other Vedic literature.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

2.1 Śaṅkara the Teacher

Śaṅkara is seen to be a prolific author in the tradition of Sanātana Dharma. He was born in 788 CE (Waite, 2007) in the place currently known as Kaladi, Kerala, India (Rao, 2012). Hagiographies stated that he lived a short life of 32 years but accomplished many feats that included commentaries on eleven Upaniṣads, Bhagavad Gītā, Brahma Sūtra and numerous independent texts cum hymns (Tapasyananda, 2007). A total of 117 works have been attributed to him which comprised of original works related to Vedānta Philosophy and devotional hymns as well as commentarial literature (Samata, 1999). However scholars have questioned these blanket attribution and challenged the assumptions by a careful analysis of the works (Iaseva, 1993; Panoli, 1999), thus leaving only a few works to be from the authentic pen of Śaṅkara.

According to Johnston (2014), Śaṅkara is seen as an important teacher of Vedānta and probably one of the greatest teachers of India. Śaṅkara is largely seen as a systemiser of the doctrine of the Upaniṣads rather than an inventor (Rao, 2012).

2.2 Vedānta Philosophy

Vedānta literally means 'the end portion of the Veda', hence refers to the Upaniṣads. It is also called Uttara Mimāmsa (Prabhavananda, 2003). Hence any school of thought that uses the Upaniṣad to formulate its philosophy can be called Vedānta. Sivananda (1947) has presented seven popular schools of Vedānta. Of which three has been cited as the most popular schools which are Advaita (non-dualism), Viśiṣṭa Advaita (Qualified non-dualism) and Dvaita (dualism) and the key propounders of these schools to be Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva respectively (Prabhavananda, 2003).

The school of Advaita is of particular interest to this thesis as it is the philosophical premise on which Sādhana Pañcakaṃ was expounded. Deutsch (1969) defined Advaita or Advaita Vedānta as "the non-dualistic system of Vedānta expounded primary by Śaṅkara" (p.3). According to Indich (1996), Advaita Vedānta can be summarised in three sentences which are:

1. Brahman (God) is non-dual and unchanging reality
2. The world is an illusion
3. Man's self is not different from Brahman

His definition is identical to the famous quote from Śaṅkara which is,

> Brahman alone is real, whereas the world is unreal. The individual is Brahman alone, no other. (V.D. 67)

The definition of Advaita Vedānta as described by Indich (1996) is indeed a soteriological realisation to Śaṅkara. This is described to be a state of freedom and sometimes deemed to be the ultimate goal of life called Mokṣa (Chattopadhyaya, 2000). Mokṣa is defined as the dawn of freedom from the cycle of reincarnation (Hinduism Today, 2007). The means to achieve this state, according to Advaita Vedānta, is in the realisation of knowing the Self to be Brahman (Hinduism Today, 2007). The realisation takes place through the knowledge from the Upaniṣads (Hirst, 2005) and hence it is called Jñāna Yoga (Adiswarananda, 2006). Śaṅkara stated that Mokṣa can only be gained through the Upaniṣads and not through any other means (B.S.B. 1.1.3).

Śaṅkara also claimed that actions (Karma) are completely useless in the pursuit of Mokṣa as its domain is in the realms of the acquisition and removal of material objects and not the eternal Self or Brahman (V.C. 7). Hence he denounced Karma in his works following the footsteps of the Upaniṣads (M.U. 1.2.9) and Bhagavad Gītā (B.G. 2.42-43). However, Śaṅkara does state that while Karma does not have a direct relationship with Mokṣa, it does play a secondary role is preparing the mind for the pursuit of knowledge (B.U.B. 3.3). Śaṅkara also stated that Karma when

done in the spirit of Karma Yoga can purify the mind to be eligible for Jñāna Yoga (B.G.B. 5.11) Hence the tradition of Advaita Vedānta views Karma as not as important as Jñāna except for its role in mental purification.

2.3. The Present Work - Sādhana Pañcakaṃ

The present work titled Sādhana Pañcakaṃ or sometimes Upadeśa Pañcakaṃ is attributed to the pen of Śaṅkara. The word 'Sādhana' means 'Spiritual practice' and 'Pañcakaṃ' means 'a set of five hymns'. It is not the most popular of Śaṅkara's texts but has gained popularity over the recent years with increased discourses and printed publications. Brahmananda (1999) cites a story where the creation of the text was attributed to a request of one of Śaṅkara's disciples to present Vedānta in a nutshell. Sādhana Pañcakaṃ was supposedly composed as an outcome of this request.

Commentaries on the Sādhana Pañcakaṃ have been largely popular as discourses in Ashrams and Vedānta centres. However only a handful of commentaries are available on this text in print. Popular works in print have been authored by Chinmayananda (2003), Muralidhara (2000) and Sonde (2007).

2.3.1. The Textual Structure

The Sādhana Pañcakaṃ presents forty instructions in five verses. These forty instructions can be framed based on the traditional view of life stages called the Āśrama Dharma as well as the process involved in Jñāna Yoga. The forty instructions can be summarised as follows:

Instructions 1 - 5 : Performance of Karmas and Karma Yoga
'' 6 - 8 : Development of Dispassion
'' 9 - 11: Cultivating Conducive attitudes
'' 12 : Becoming a renunciate (Sannyāsin)
'' 13 - 15: Life with the Guru
'' 16: Jñāna Yoga step 1: Śravaṇam
'' 17 - 20: Jñāna Yoga step 2: Mananam
'' 21 - 23: Jñāna Yoga step 3: Nididhyāsana
'' 24 - 33: Lifestyle Attitudes of a Aspirant
'' 34 - 40: Jñāna Yoga step 3: Goals of Nididhyāsana

In terms of the lifestyle, Āśrama Dharma, the instructions will be like this:

Instruction 1: Brahmacarya - Celibate Student Life
Instructions 2 -5: Gārhasthya - Householder Life
Instructions 6 - 13: Vānaprastha - Anchorite Life
Instructions 14-40: Sannyāsa - Renunciate

The text spends a great deal of time in the life of Sannyāsa and its enjoined practices. However, it is worthy to note that the bedrock of Sannyāsa is the other three āśramas. Without performing Karmas, one may not be effective in the life of Sannyāsa. Hence, a seeker would need to observe his or her duties before embarking on Jñāna Yoga.

2.3.2. Unique Features

The Sādhana Pañcakaṃ has a couple unique features not found in other texts of Śaṅkara. Firstly, it is instructional in a systematic fashion. It serves as a progressive step by step guide to attaining Mokṣa with forty instructions. Secondly, it also caters to all types of aspirants with differing aptitudes such that one would need to have accomplished one instruction before proceeding on to the next. In doing so it prepares an aspirant to avoid difficulties in the path and also to guide them from not taking the next step if he or she is not ready to do so. Thirdly, it covers all the four āśrama in attaining the Mokṣa unlike other texts which assumes that the aspirant is a Sannyāsin.

2.4. Statement of Problem

All the extant commentaries on Sādhana Pañcakaṃ have been taught targeted at aspirants. These commentaries have focused on the needs of practitioners rather than a textual study. Hence no support from other literature, especially from other works of Śaṅkara and later day authors after Śaṅkara have been cited in these commentaries. Among the printed works on Sādhana Pañcakaṃ, only Sonde's works have cited valid references from Vedic literature but again it was targeted at practitioners.

The content of Sādhana Pañcakaṃ deserves an academic treatment due to its unique features. However, no such work has been done in this direction thus far, and the current thesis aims to fill this gap.

Chapter 3
Commentary on the Text

This chapter shall focus on the commenting on the text with support from various Vedic literature and reasoning.

3.1. Daily Study of Veda

vedo nityamadhīyatāṃ
Let the veda be studied (or chanted) daily.

The traditional lifestyle of a Vedic aspirant is the chanting of the Vedas. The daily study of the veda is the chanting or learning of the Veda. This is learned during the stage of Brahmacarya or celibate student life. The Veda here refers to the one or more of the four vedas (Rg, Yajur, Sāma and Atharva Vedas) also known as the Śruti. One can either choose the chants from the Veda that the family lineage belongs to or choose the Vedic lineage of one's teacher.

The learning and chanting of the Veda is of prime importance. Without this observance, one cannot come to know subjects like Dharma, Karma, Brahman etc. Hence the Vedas are seen as the pramāṇa (means of knowledge) for knowing realities that are beyond the range of our limited mind and sense organs.

If the Vedas are not accessible, then the learning resources could be the Smrtis such as the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and the Purānas. Through the learning and study of these texts one comes to appreciate new realities not known before. The scriptures are the pramāṇa for knowing realities that are beyond the range of the five senses (B.S.B. 1.1.3). God, Karma, Punya (merits), Pāpa (demerits), Mokṣa etc are concepts that are unknown to humans without the availability of Scriptural knowledge. Through the study of the Vedas, one comes to know these realities. And more importantly, one comes to appreciate the value of Dharma. Having appreciated Dharma, one comes to know one's own Dharma which is called Svadharma. Kṛṣṇa stated,

> One's own duty, though defective, is superior to another's duty well-performed. Death is better while engaged in one's own duty; another's duty is fraught with fear. (B.G. 3.35)

And also,

> The four castes have been created by Me through a classification of the gunas and duties. (B.G. 4.13)

As the Bhagavad Gītā states, everyone's Svadharma is different and doing one's own Dharma based on guna (disposition) and karma (duties) will bring the greatest spiritual benefit.

3.2. Performance of Duties

taduditaṃ karma svanuṣṭhīyatāṃ
May you perform your karmas as taught by the Vedas.

Having known one's Svadharma through the Śruti or Smrtis, the seeker should diligently perform his or her duties. Technically, Vedic sacrifices are entitled to be performed by householders (grhasthas) only. Hence, this instruction indicates the entrance into the householder stage from the celibate student stage. In this stage, the seeker becomes economically active and productive to society. The first step of this transition is marked by marriage and to perpetuate the lineage through progeny.

Having married, the seeker is now expected to perform daily or nitya karmas (V.S. 9) and occasional or naimittika rites (V.S. 10).

3.2.1. Daily Rites

The daily rites constitute the performance of the five sacrifices (M.S. 3.67):

1. Brahma Yajña - This is the recitation of the Vedic texts. This Yajña is to express our gratitude for the Rṣis. The recitation also includes learning and practice.

2. Deva Yajña - This is the performance of worship to the Devas in the form of a puja or a homa. This expresses our gratitude to the Devas.

3. Pitr Yajña - This is the performance of rituals for the appeasement of departed ancestors. This is also called tarpanam, the offering of water. This expresses our gratitude to departed parents and ancestors.

4. Manuṣya Yajña - This is done by feeding those who need it. Traditionally this was done for wandering saints, sages and vedic students. Today this could extended to those people who are in need such as those who are poverty stricken, and the physically and mentally challenged.

5. Bhūta Yajña - This is for nurturing nature. This is done though environmental conservation and tending to the other beings in our habitat. The awareness to nurture nature is so much relevant today than ever.

3.2.2 Occasional Rites

The occasional rites constitute sacraments called Samskāras that are done from time of conception till the time of death. In total 48 samskāras have been mentioned in the Vedic scriptures. Of which 16 are seen to be popular and practicable (Pandey, 1969).

These two sets of Karmas together constitute Niṣkāma Karmas when they are done without a specific goal in mind and done with minimal expectations. These karmas together serve the purpose of purifying the mind (V.S. 13).

3.3. Worship of God

tenesasya vidhīyatāmapacitiḥ
Let the worship of Īśvara be by the performance of your duties.

The Niṣkāma Karmas, referred to in the previous instruction, are to be done with the attitude of worship of God. This is stated in the Bhagavad Gītā as the offering one's actions to God,

> One who acts by dedicating actions to Brahman and by renouncing attachment, he does not become polluted by sin, just as a lotus leaf is not by water. (B.G. 5.10)

Hence the performance of one's duties consistent with one's disposition and vocation is Dharma (B.G. 4.13). Hence the performance of one's Svadharma is the worship of God. This attitude of offering one's actions to God is called Yoga Buddhi, which the Bhagavad Gītā states as,

> Possessed of wisdom, one rejects here both virtue and vice. Therefore devote yourself to yoga. Yoga is skilfulness in action. (B.G. 2.50)

In addition, the actions would have to be performed with skilfulness, which is nothing but Karmas pertaining to one's duties and disposition. Having offered one's actions, one should also learn to accept the results accrued with grace and acceptance which is called Samatva, as Kṛṣṇa says,

> By being established in Yoga, O Dhananjaya (Arjuna), undertake actions, casting off attachment and remaining equipoised in success and failure. Equanimity is called Yoga. (B.G. 2.48)

This spirit of offering actions with skilfulness and accepting results with graceful acceptance is called Karma Yoga. Kṛṣṇa states,

> Your right is for action alone, never for the results. Do not become the agent of the results of action. May you not have any inclination for inaction. (B.G. 2.47)

The offering of one's actions to God is relevant to all Vedic practitioners. However, the graceful acceptance of the accrued results is only relevant to those who seek Mokṣa because the attitude of acceptance is for those who wish to cultivate a Sannyāsa attitude which is relevant for the pursuit of Mokṣa and will be discussed in the 12th instruction. Hence from a technical perspective, Karma Yoga is only relevant to someone who has Mokṣa as his or her clear goal. Śaṅkara makes a pertinent point that Karma Yoga leads to the purification of the mind which is an important pre-requisite for pursuing Mokṣa (B.G.B. 5.11, 5.6, 18.5).

The grace of god is essential to people of all walks of life, hence the worship of God through the performance of karmas is essential. This also makes the worship a way of life rather than an activity.

3.4. Renunciation of Desires

kāmye matistyajyatām
Renounce desires from your mind.

The text states that one should give up karmas related to enjoyments and wealth acquisition other than those that are consistent with one's duties. Hence, the performance of Niṣkāma Karmas excludes the following types of Karmas:

1. Niṣiddha Karma - These are karmas that should not be done such as that which causes harm or that which does not pertain to one's disposition and vocation (V.S. 8). This also means that one should only perform one's duty and not the duty of others.

2. Kāmya Karma - This set of karmas are rituals that are meant for the specific results related to securities, wealth and enjoyments here and hereafter (V.S. 7). These also pertain to desires such as children, house and even the removal of doṣas (astrological defects). The primary concern with Kāmya Karmas being as impediment is in its development of passion and promoting attachment. Kṛṣṇa says,

   > The blessed Lord said, The learned ones know sannyāsa to be the giving up of actions done with a desire for reward. The adepts call the abandonment of the results of all works as tyāga (renunciation). (B.G. 18.2)

The performance of the Niṣiddha Karmas produce papa or demerits that will not promote wellbeing and the performance of kāmya karmas leads to over dependence on the external situations. Hence, the Niṣiddha karmas are prohibited while the Kāmya Karmas are discouraged. In the modern times, it may may challenging to renounce Kāmya Karmas due to lifestyle choices, but it is recommended that they are reduced the least.

3.5. Neutralising Results of Unwholesome Actions

pāpaughaḥ paridhūyatāṃ
May you wash away the accumulated pāpas.

Papas are unwholesome results of Niṣiddha Karmas or prohibited actions. There are times when such actions are done knowingly and unknowingly. When these actions are done knowingly it is called prativaya karmas. When these actions are done unknowingly they are called Sūnā. The fifth instruction calls for the neutralisation of these papa arising from these two sources. The effects of papa can manifest itself in the form of pain, sorrow, obstacles and ignorance. These effects are not conducive for an aspirant of Mokṣa.

The neutralisation of papa are done by directed karmas called prāyascitta. The prāyascitta for Sūnā is through the performance of nitya karmas (M.S. 3.69). The prāyascitta for the prativaya karmas and niṣiddha karmas can be done through various prāyascittas prescribed in the scriptures. Such actions can be as extreme as fasting for a month called the Cāndrāyana (G.D.S. 27.16) to a simple action like doing several prānāyāmas (M.S. 11.249).

The important purpose of this instruction is the recognition and acknowledgement of a wrong doing and the subsequent remedy for it. This shows the mental attitude of the aspirant which implies commitment and seriousness in the observance of Dharma.

The faithful performance of one's Niṣkāma Karmas will bestow punya and prevent the rise of papa. But one doesn't enjoy punya all the time. It comes and goes or sometimes it never comes. Hence the next instruction.

3.6. Defects of Pleasures

bhavasukhe doṣo'nusandhīyatām
Deliberate on the defects of impermanent pleasures.

The sixth instruction encourages reflection and analysis on the nature of pleasures and the causative force which are karmas. This deliberation gives rise to dispassion. Śaṅkara states,

> The pleasures and riches of worldly life are deceptive appearances. Understanding that they are all but a passing-show, be detached and dispassionate, cultivate renunciation and seek Brahman. (B.G.M. 11)

Pleasures are defined as the experience of wealth and enjoyments. When pleasures are analysed, it is seen to have a beginning and end in time. Hence they don't last forever. The second defect of pleasures is that it is insatiable like a fire that continues burning as more fuel is added. Desires are likened to be that fire. Desires never get fulfilled by the satisfaction of it. The third defect of pleasures is that it is a struggle to acquire it. One has to put much effort to acquire pleasures and the greater the degree of its enjoyment, the greater the effort. The fourth defect is upon acquiring it, one has to sustain and maintain it. Sometimes it may take many times more energy and time to maintain an object of pleasure than to acquire it. In summary the reflection and analysis of these five defects will give rise to dispassion. Further, Bhartrhari, the famous scholar, with extreme dispassion even denounces all religious actions,

> I do not find the virtuous distinction produced by Ceremonial observances through life after life to be conducive to well-being; For the sum of such virtuous merits when weighed in mind inspires fear in me. Enjoyments earned by great accession of merit multiply so greatly in the case of people attached to them only to bring them misery and peril (V.Sh. 11)

One would also realise that pleasures are nothing but the results of good karmas which are punya. Hence the pleasures have a direct relation to karmas, in particular Kāmya Karmas. This is the rationale behind the fourth instruction to give up Kāmya Karmas. Sometimes these are not only caused by religious karmas but also secular karmas. A further deliberation will slowly indicate that punya is also a result of Svadharma and Dharma, and that the latter too is defective.

3.7. Positive Self Regard

ātmecchā vyavasīyatāṃ
Cultivate positive regard for the Self.

The sixth instruction is to avert the danger of becoming mentally debilitated. Therefore, the deliberation has to be tempered with positivity. Due to extreme dispassion one may:

- commit suicide
- become depressed
- give up faith in religion
- or become mentally imbalanced

Hence an aspirant must have a positive goal when conducting the deliberation on the impermanence of pleasures. That positive goal is the desire to want to know the Self which is the subject of Vedānta or the Upaniṣads.

Another way to look at this verse is the need for positive self regard. One needs to have hope and trust in oneself when deliberating on dispassion. This positivity is very key to the success in the path of Mokṣa. One would observe Kṛṣṇa using positive names such as Bharatarṣabha (B.G. 3.41), Dhananjaya (B.G. 2.47), Puruṣavyāghra (B.G. 18.4), Parantapa (B.G. 2.3) and Kirīti (B.G. 11.35) for Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gītā in spite of the latter being subjected to sorrow and confusion. The effect of positivity on success and flourishing in life has also been corroborated by the modern school of Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2012)

3.8. Leaving Home

nijagṛhāttūrṇaṃ vinirgamyatām
May you leave your home immediately.

The eight instruction exhorts one to leave one's home. This marks the commencement of the Vānaprastha Āśrama or the retirement stage. At this stage one retires from active lifestyle and moves into a more contemplative lifestyle that makes an aspirant more prepared for the direct pursuit of Mokṣa.

The previous instruction ensured that the aspirant enters this stage of his or her life without any sore feelings but rather positively. This is important as feelings of insecurity and withdrawal symptoms from activity may crop up to destabilise a person. The aspirant may either choose to do this entrance into a retirement stage alone or with one's spouse.

The gradual transition into this lifestyle cultivates the attitude of forbearance as the earlier comforts of life are not there anymore. Traditionally aspirants used to move into the forest to live such a life (Olivelle, 1993).

3.9. Satsanga

saṅgaḥ satsu vidhīyatāṃ
May you engage in Satsanga.

The life of the aspirant having transited into a Vānaprastha life does not end there. This too is a means to acquiring the final goal of his or her life, Mokṣa. One should not be content with just the retirement lifestyle but actively engage in the right steps forward. The instruction of this verse is to engage in Satsanga.

A Vānaprasthin is intent on finding out the solution to life's problems. After leaving the house, he may not have found a Guru yet. Therefore, the company of like-minded people will be very valuable as that will expose the aspirant to different philosophies and means to Mokṣa. This will also sharpen his discriminative abilities and also find a path that suits his disposition and his needs. In Satsanga, he listens to the discussions of the wise and sharpens his Viveka at this stage of his life.

Śaṅkara states that Satsanga leads to Nissanga which is detachment (B.G.M. 9). This detachment will eventually result in Sannyāsa, renunciant stage of life. At this stage of his life the aspirant does not have an answer but he is still a seeker with a clear purpose.

3.10. Devotion to God

bhagavato bhaktirdṛḍhā''dhīyatāṃ
May you develop unswerving devotion to Īśvara.

The life of a Vānaprasthin is fraught with its own set of challenges. The aspirant may encounter obstacles at the levels of ādhyātmika, ādhibhautika and ādhidaivika (V.P. 6.5). ādhyātmika are problems centred on the body, sense - mind complex. ādhibhautika problems are pertaining to people and environment in which he lives. The habitat or society could also give problems to him. ādhidaivika problems are of catastrophic nature such as earthquakes, typhoons etc. One needs to be clear from these three types of issues to focus on the path of Mokṣa. The only way to do this is through unswerving devotion to God. As the traditional verse of Gītā Dhyanam says,

> I salute that Madhava (Lord Kṛṣṇa), the supremely blissful one, by whose grace a dumb man can become eloquent, and a lame person cross over the mountains. (Tapasyananda, 2006)

The Yoga Sūtras also states that one can accomplish mastery over the mind by just "Īśvara pranidhāna - Surrender to God" (Y.S. 1.23). Such is the power of Bhakti that one can overcome even the greatest obstacles through Bhakti.

These challenges may also hinder the progress of the seeker in getting the right teaching and a Guru. Therefore, the unswerving devotion to Īśvara will take care of these obstacles through anugraha, grace. So one should always have devotion to Īśvara for bringing the teaching and the teacher to oneself. In fact the Avadhūta Gītā states that through God's grace alone does one obtain the desire to know oneself (A.G. 1).

The next instruction shall commence the discussion about the qualifications one should acquire before meeting the Guru.

3.11. Developing Mental Aptitude

śāntyādiḥ paricīyatāṃ
Cultivate the inner wealth starting from śānti

With this instruction, commences the mental aptitude of the aspirant. The mental aptitudes are as important as Bhakti and the desire for Mokṣa. Or else it it can be likened to a vehicle with a driver and destination but without an engine. The mind is an important instrument in Vedānta. Without an able mind Self-knowledge cannot be assimilated due the triple process of Jñāna Yoga being entirely a mental endeavour.

The instruction here entails what is popularly called the Ṣatka Sampatti, six fold mental accomplishments, which are Śama (or śānti), Dama, Uparati, Titikṣā, Śraddhā and Samādhāna.

1. Śama – Śama is the mastery over the mind although it is generally translated as 'control of mind' (T.B). Controlling the mind may lead to grave consequences as it may lead to regressions and suppression. On the other hand, mastery over the mind would mean that the mind is at your disposal with reference to choices and decisions one makes in life. The mind also remains calm in spite of emotional strifes and external phenomenon. A mind endowed with Śama may be able to say 'No' and 'Yes' to a desire with certitude.

   Śama can be cultivated through meditation and contemplation. The Yoga Sūtras and the Haṭha Yoga scriptures prescribe many practices one could be undertaken to develop Śama.

   The importance of Śama for an aspirant is the ability to have the mind at his or her disposal when undertaking Jñāna Yoga. It also confers the certitude necessary to undertake the path with commitment. This will ensure that the pursuit of Jñāna Yoga is not a fair weather pursuit that will be discarded when the going gets tough. Śama ensures that mind is kept in focus and committed to the pursuit. A verse in support for this discipline,

   > But whoso is devoid of a discriminating intellect, possessed of an unrestrained mind and is ever impure, does not attain that goal, but goes to samsara. (K.U. 1.3.7)

2. Dama – Dama is the mastery over sense organs with reference to objective experiences (T.B). Again this does not refer to the control of sense organs. Trying to curb the senses could also mean that one could be cheating your mind while it harbours attachment to objects at a sub-conscious level. Dama is therefore the ability to restrain when objects are reported by the senses or when it draws the mind to the object. A simple illustration would be when our eyes fall on our favourite food. Immediately the mind gets drawn to it. Similarly when we are meditating our mind could be drawn by the sound of our favourite song. Dama implies the challenge of vāsanās (innate tendencies) and samskāras (mental impressions) created by likes and dislikes. These vāsanās and samskāras resurface the moment the sensory organs comes into contact with a sensory object.

   Dama can be cultivated through the practice of Pratyāhāra (Y.S. 2.54) or Śāmbhavi Mudra (H.Y.P. 4.36). The importance of Dama is in ensuring that the mind is not distracted by the

call of sense organs when pursuing Jñāna Yoga. It is the sense organs that are wild and uncontrollable and hence the likes and dislikes of the past are very powerful like a tempest that can derail the aspirant when listening and assimilating the Vedānta teachings. Śaṅkara states this aptly as,

> Only he who is free from the terrible hankering after the senses which is so hard to overcome is fit for liberation, and no-one else, not even if he is an expert in the six branches of scripture. The shark of longing grasps those whose desire for liberation is only superficial by the throat as they try to cross the sea of samsara and drowns them halfway. (V.C. 78-79)

3. Samādhāna – Samādhāna is defined as a one-pointed mind or a mind without distractions (T.B). It is a mind that can stay where you want it to for a length of time. Two definitive factors are concentration and length of time. The typical problem faced by aspirants is a mind that it is always wavering like a flame in the wind. In the seat of meditation too one will face such problems when the mind gets distracted from the object of meditation.

Samādhāna can be cultivated by the practice of Dhāraṇā as prescribed in the Yoga Sūtras (Y.S. 3.1). Dhāraṇa is the concentration of the mind on a particular object via the sense organs. There are many dhāraṇā practices that could be undertaken to develop concentration.

Samādhāna is important to ensure that the mind has the ability listen to the teaching from the guru without a break in concentration. The ability to be attentive over a period of time on the subject of Self-knowledge is hence very important for an aspirant. The Kaṭha Upaniṣad states,

> The intelligent one, knowing through concentration of mind, the Self that is hard to perceive, lodged in the innermost recess, located in intelligence, seated amidst misery, and ancient, abandons joy and grief. (K.U. 1.2.12)

4. Uparati – Uparati is popularly defined as the performance of duties (T.B). However, the actual definition is the giving up the dependency on all karmas. It is the abandonment of scriptural injunctions (karmas) after performing them satisfactorily or total cessation from the pursuit of sense objects. Here it refers to a mind that has gained the ability to let go of the performance of karmas for the purpose of likes and dislikes.

Uparati unfortunately cannot be developed easily unlike the other accomplishments as this pertains to the exhaustion of the need for experiences. There has always been two ways people have developed Uparati. One is through the exhaustion of legitimate desires and the other is through the extinguishment of desires.

Uparati ensures that the aspirant does not turn to Karmas as a source of support or means to Mokṣa. The years of performing karmas would naturally incline the mind towards actions and hence the accomplishment of Uparati is complete abandonment of Karmas as such. The Munḍaka Upaniṣad states,

> A wise man should resort to renunciation after examining the worlds acquired through karma, with the help of this maxim: ‘There is nothing (here) that is not the result of karma; so what is the need of (performing) karma ?’ (M.U. 1.2.12)

Uparati is closely related to the next instruction.

5. Titikṣā - Titikṣā is the forbearance of extreme sensations such as heat and cold (T.B). When our body experiences extreme heat and cold, the mind reacts to it. Most often than not the mind reacts in a state of frustration and aversion. Titikṣā is the ability to not respond adversely.

The means to cultivate titikṣā happens to be through observing tapasya or austerities. Through moderate or severe austerities one can train both the body and mind to withstand extremities in experiences. A simple example could be sleeping without a mattress or taking a cold shower. These are ways in which one can train the body and mind to forbear all extreme experiences.

The Kena Upaniṣad eulogises Tapas as,

> Of this knowledge austerity, self-restraint and action are the feet, the Vedas are all limbs and truth is the abode. (Ke.U. 4.8)

Tapas is hence very important in ensuring the body does not become a source of obstacle in Jñāna Yoga.

6. Śraddhā - Śraddhā is genuine faith in the words of the guru and the Vedānta scriptures (T.B). This faith is not a blind faith or one without reason. This faith is that which is required even in secular endeavours such as faith in the school where one gets admitted to etc. This faith is required to ensure that what is said is realisable and not a concept or a point of view.

Faith is cultivated through understanding the nature of the Vedas and how it reveals realities that are not within the range of sense organs. Another means to cultivate faith is through the experiences of Jīvanmuktas. One should be able to say "since they have attained it, so can I". The third dimension is through the belief that the Guru is teaching in the best interest of the aspirant and to have trust in his or her words.

This is very important because the teaching may not bear fruit immediately and hence requires time for it to bear fruit. And Mokṣa is unlike any other sensory experience like seeing or tasting an object. It is subtle and taught through words and hence faith is very key to the success in Jñāna Yoga.

In the tradition of Sanātana Dharma, there have been many ways though which the qualifications can be cultivated. Śaṅkara states a few means to acquiring these qualifications,

> The four preliminary qualifications (the means to the attainment of knowledge), such as Vairāgya (dispassion) and the like, are acquired by men by propitiating Hari (the Lord), through austerities and the performance of duties pertaining to their social order and stage in life. (A.A. 3)

The salient point of the verse above is Hari bhakti or devotion to god. The devotional practices are called Upāsanās. One of the broadest means via bhakti is through Meditation, Japa and Pūjas that are outcomes of devotion. Kṛṣṇa says,

> Having your mind fixed on Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me, and bow down to Me. By concentrating your mind and accepting Me as the supreme Goal, you shall surely attain Me who am thus the Self. (B.G. 9.34)

Bhakti can be expressed through nine forms as per the Bhāgavata Purāna (7.5.23-24). They are

1. Śravaṇa - The listening of glories and pastimes of God's incarnations through the reading the puranas and itihasas. e.g. King Parikṣit

2. Kīrtana - The singing of names and songs of god. This is also one of the simplest means to attaining purification. e.g. nārada, caitanya mahaprabhu

3. Smarana - Remembering God as much as we can in our daily life. This can be done by repetition of God's names (mantra japa). This is one of the easiest means to propitiate God. Sometimes the name of the lord is considered to be the very embodiment of God and hence considered to be very potent. Kṛṣṇa says that among sacrifices, he is sacrifice of Japa (B.G. 10.25). e.g. prahlāda

Another type of smarana is through the meditation on God. In meditation one can recollect the various attributes of god. For example, the Bhagavad Gītā's Cosmic Form visualisation can be used in meditation too. e.g. Kapila

4. Pādasevana - This is service to God. This can be done through the service at places of worship, helping the needy and tending to the environment. Helping others is known in modern world as Narayana Seva by Swami Vivekananda. e.g. King bharata, mahātma gāndhi , Swami Vivekananda

5. Arcana - This is the worship of god through systematic offerings called puja. Traditionally there are five or sixteen offerings as the simplest mode of worship. e.g. rukminī, śabarī

6. Vandana - This is prostration to God's forms. This act of respect and submission can be done by physically and mentally prostrating in front of a form of god. e.g. nāmadev

7. Dāsya - This is the attitude of considering oneself as a servant of god. This can be done by doing only what is mandated in the scriptures in accordance to one's role and duties. e.g. hanumān, mīra bāi

8. Sakhya - This is cultivating an attitude of friendship towards god. Friendship implies the treatment of God as an equal. Treating God as a confidant and conversing with him or her on anything mundane or lofty. e.g. Kucela, Arjuna

9. ātmanivedana - This is an attitude of total surrender to God. To the aspirant, every particle of creation is nothing but God. To the devotee, everything happens as it is the will of God. With this knowledge you offer yourself to God. By complete surrender to God, you consign all responsibilities to him or her. e.g. King Mahābali

After gaining these qualifications,

3.12. Taking up Sannyasa

dṛḍhataraṃ karmāśu santyajyatām
Give up all karmas firmly.

This is the commencement of the final āśrama, sannyāsa. Sannyāsa is the renunciation of possessions (tangible & intangible) which have no value for one's pursuit of Mokṣa. This instruction can be seen as the abandonment of the Pravrtti Mārga (pursuit of wealth and enjoyments as life's goal) for Nivrtti Mārga (pursuit of Mokṣa as life's goal through renunciation). The Munḍaka Upaniṣad states,

> A Brahmana should resort to renunciation after examining the worlds acquired through karma, with the help of this maxim: 'There is nothing (here) that is not the result of karma; so what is the need of (performing) karma?' For knowing that Reality he should go, with sacrificial faggots in hand, only to a teacher versed in the Vedas and absorbed in Brahman. (M.U. 1.2.12)

Vidyāranaya (14th century CE), had stated four types of Sannyāsa in his Jivanmuktiviveka, which are:

1. Kuṭicaka Sannyāsa - This is the easiest type as it would require the aspirant to move in to a small hut next to his home and continue his Sādhanas. These are suitable for people who may still have responsibilities or dependents. Self-knowledge is yet to dawn on this type of Sannyāsins. They are to carry three thin wooden staffs tied together as an identification.

2. Bahudaka Sannyāsa - This Sannyāsa is one that would allow the Sannyāsin to move from place to place without a permanent abode. At this stage the dispassion towards life and the attraction towards Mokṣa is not strong. And Self-knowledge has not been introduced to the Sannyāsin yet. They are to carry a three thin wooden staffs tied together just as the Kuṭicaka.

3. Hamsa Sannyāsa - This Sannyāsa is characterised by the strong aversion to worldly life. The Hamsa Sannyāsin is introduced to Sādhanas and Tapasya but yet to be exposed to Self-knowledge.

4. Paramahamsa Sannyāsa - This is the highest order of Sannyāsins where they have strong aversion to worldly life and has attained Mokṣa. In this type, there are two further subtypes:

    4.1. Vividiṣā Sannyāsa - This is the Sannyāsa that is taken to seek Self-knowledge. This means that the aspirant decides to take up Sannyāsa exclusively for the pursuit of Jñāna Yoga.

    4.2. Vidvat Sannyāsa - This type of Sannyāsa is taken after the assimilation of Self-knowledge when the aspirant has become a Jīvanmukta. Yajñavalkya is an example for this type (B.U. 2.4.1).

The 12th instruction appears to suggest the Vividiṣā type of Sannyāsa where the Sannyāsa is taken to pursue Jñāna Yoga.

However, in today's context vividiṣā sannyāsa can be of two approaches viz. bahya sannyāsa (sannyāsa through the taking up of the ochre or orange robes etc) and antaranga sannyāsa (internal renunciation through the abandonment of the value for Pravrtti Mārga). Swami Vidyāranya states,

> "Students, householders and hermits who for some reason could not take to Sannyāsa, even performance of their peculiar duties of the respective āśramas is not incompatible with the mental renunciation for attaining knowledge." (J.V).

Hence both forms of sannyāsa are sanctioned by the shastras as two forms of vividiṣā sannyāsa (renunciation of the seeker of knowledge). Vividiṣā Sannyāsa is also the part of Nivrtti Mārga.

To summarise, two reasons can be cited for taking up Sannyāsa: One is vairāgya (with reference to possessions) and the other is vairāgya + desire to know oneself. However, scriptures also explain that Sannyāsa is the removal of three intrinsic desires (eṣaṇa) namely vit, putra and loka (B.U. 3.5.1). Vit is the wealth, putra is children and loka is world. The tradition states that three desires are intrinsic and once these three desires are not there, one can take Sannyāsa. Hence Vairāgya pertains to the renunciation of these three desires.

With this understanding, the instruction of the text indicates the shift of priorities for the seeker from Dharma, Artha and Kama (Pravrtti Mārga) to Mokṣa (Nivrtti Mārga). Here the karmas that should be given up are the niṣkāma karmas. The seeker understands with firmness that karmas cannot lead one to Mokṣa. He knows that karma is a product of ignorance (avidyā) as the pāpa and punya it produces will take the seeker to numerous other births. So he loses all faith in the karmas because they are limited by nature. This recognition is a product of a ripe Vairāgya.

These karmas that need to be renounced can also refer to laukika karmas which are things that we seek for basic necessities (dress, job, name, fame etc..). These inclinations may be there in the seeker and these must be renounced too.

Traditionally Sannyāsa was seen as a prerequisite for Self-knowledge. Śaṅkara assumes that the seeker of Self-Knowledge is a Sannyāsin (B.S.B. 3.4.20).

3.13. Seeking a Guru

sadvidvānupasṛpyatāṃ
May you seek a qualified teacher.

After taking up Sannyāsa, the next instruction is for one to seek a qualified teacher. The teacher is instrumental in the awakening of the right vision of Mokṣa. The samvāda (dialogue) between teacher and student will destroy the delusion of the student. Therefore, independent study or

pursuit is discouraged in the pursuit of Mokṣa. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad states that one can get knowledge through a teacher alone (C.U. 6.18.2). In fact, traditionally the Upaniṣads may not have been available in all nooks and corners of the society. It was only possessed by teachers who have gained the vision of Vedānta. Therefore, to gain the knowledge the teacher then becomes an absolute necessity. However today books on Vedānta are available everywhere and hence the guidance of a guru appears to be not as important. But this should not be the norm for learning Vedānta. Vedānta is a subtle subject and hence would require the skilful guidance from a traditional teacher to do the job (B.G. 4.34).

The instruction specifically defines the teacher as a sadvidvān. The word 'sad' means true and 'vidvān' means knower. The guru must be a true knower of himself. The sadvidvān can be better understood through definition given in the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad as a Śrotriya Brahmaniṣṭha, one who knows the Vedas and established in the Self (M.U. 1.2.12).

In addition, The Guru Gītā of the Skanda Purāna states that there are 7 types of Guru (Narayanananda, 1999).

1. Sūcaka Guru - one who is well-educated and has mastery over secular knowledge

2. Vācaka Guru - a teacher of the duties of the different vocations (based on disposition), orders, Dharma

3. Bodhaka Guru - initiates seekers into the five syllabled mantra (namaḥ śivāya) and others

4. Niṣiddha Guru - initiates seekers into the lower types of mantras such as Mohana, Mārana and Vaśya amongst others

5. Vihita Guru - defines life to be temporary and an abode of misery. He has an ascetic tendency

6. Kārana Guru - teaches verses of the Upaniṣads and others. He removes the diseased life of impermanence

7. Paramaguru - an expert in uprooting all doubts, and confers Mokṣa

Of the seven types of guru the first three represent teachers of Pravrtti Mārga. The fourth type of teacher is one who should be shunned because he deals with esoteric rites. The final three types of teachers are belonging to the Nivrtti Mārga and very relevant to the teachings of Sādhana Pañcakaṃ. Among the three, the sadvidvan is the paramaguru as he represents the ideal perfection of being a Śrotriya and Brahmaniṣṭha.

However the reality is far from the ideal in the sense of being able to find a qualified teacher. Hence modern teachers have devised a priority of teachers based on the qualifications as presented by the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad. Based on that are three types of Gurus of Vedānta:

1. Brahmaniṣṭha – One who is established in the knowledge of Brahman or Self-Knowledge

2. Śrotriya - One who knows the right method of teaching Self-Knowledge and the Tradition of Teaching

3. Śrotriya Brahmaniṣṭha – One who has both of the above

When seeking a teacher, one must ensure that one chooses the 3rd type of teacher as he would be the best teacher. If such a teacher cannot be found, then one should find the 2nd type of teacher who is the second best. The last choice should be the Brahmaniṣṭha because of the lack of the right method of teaching. But the grace and inspiration that the Brahmaniṣṭha emits cannot be disregarded. One will be able to see a Jīvanmukta in this type of teacher but one may not leave with the right vision from his teachings unless one has full measures of the qualifications.

However, it may be very difficult to identify who a Brahmaniṣṭha is. But a Śrotriya can be easily identified by the way he or she teaches. One would be able to see how the Śrotriyas use the Upaniṣad wisdom as the pramāṇa for Self-knowledge. The Śrotriya will use various methods with ease to convey the teaching. For this reason, it is not necessary that one needs a single teacher in one's life. There could be many teachers one could learn from, each to fulfil a particular need of the seeker based on the seeker's aptitude and teacher's competency.

3.14. Serving the Guru

pratidinaṃ tatpādukā sevyatāṃ
May you worship his sandals or
may you serve the teacher while you are with him.

This instruction implies the respect and devotion shown to the Guru. The guru represents the whole guru paramparā (lineage) and the sampradāya (tradition of teaching). Therefore, the teacher becomes everything for the seeker until knowledge dawns. Here the teacher does not demand the worship of his sandals or feet but rather the seeker serves him and tends to his needs because this is the least he could do to show his gratitude to the teacher who gives him the supreme knowledge. Even before asking to be taught, one should first serve him. That is the meaning.

So, this devotion and respect may not necessarily be the physical worship of the sandals. Rather it only implies the gratitude, love and devotion for the teacher and the teaching. Another perspective would be that the sandals represent the most unimportant and lowest possession of the teacher. So the instruction implies that the devotion must be given even to this sandals to indicate that everything that has contact with the teacher is holy and worthy. Hence, the tradition has great hymns like the Gurupādukā Stotram and Guru Stotram to show our respect and gratitude to the Guru. These stotrams also indicate the divine qualities of the Guru being found in his feet and hence also expressed through the worship of the sandals. This worship also brings great blessings to the seeker.

Kṛṣṇa states "tad viddhi pranipatena paripraśnena sevaya" which means that to know the truth one should prostrate in front of the teacher and then inquire about the truth while serving him (B.G. 4.34).Hence the act of prostration is symbolic of surrender to the guru for guidance and knowledge.

3.15. Asking the Guru for Knowledge

brahmaikākṣaramarthyatāṃ
May you ask for the One Imperishable Brahman.

Continuing from the instruction to worship and serve the teacher, one should now inquire about the truth (paripraśnena). The truth sought by the seeker is about Brahman and hence that should be asked by the seeker to the guru.

The teacher reveals the knowledge of Brahman to the seeker. This knowledge of Brahman is encapsulated in the syllable (akṣaram), Om. The word Akṣaram also means Imperishable. The Kaṭha Upaniṣad presents Brahman as Akṣaram, the imperishable (K.U. 1.2.16). Om indicates both saguna (with attributes) and nirguna (without attributes) Brahman. The knowledge of nirguna Brahman destroys samsara. Therefore, by knowing that which is imperishable one becomes a Jīvanmukta, free from the life of birth and death.

One more thing to note here is that at this point the seeker is still ignorant of the way out of his pangs of sorrow. So he asks for Brahman because that is the only anchor he knows which is imperishable and that too from the study of the Vedas.

Another key note here is that this knowledge is to be asked for by the seeker. Unless one has asked, one should not be given. The asking indicates adhikāra on the part of the seeker. The teacher too has to investigate if the seeker is sincere and genuine before teaching the knowledge. Vidyāranya states

Unasked let this knowledge be not given to anyone and even when inappropriately asked this knowledge aught not to be given. Even though the Guru knows, let him act like an ignoramus in the world.' This is a norm laid down in the scriptures (A.P)

With the 15th instruction, the lifestyle of aspirant with his guru has been presented.

3.16. Listening to the Upaniṣad Statements

śrutiśirovākyaṃ samākarṇyatām
May you listen to the Upaniṣad vākyas attentively.

The Upaniṣads form a significant part of the Vedas or Śruti and it forms the final section of the Vedas. The early sections of the Vedas present hymns, ritual instructions and meditations which are presented by the Samhitās, Brāhmanas and āranyakas respectively. The Upaniṣads which form the fourth and final section present the knowledge and philosophical teachings of the Vedas. Herein is presented the knowledge of Brahman and Atman. Traditionally, 108 Upaniṣads connected to the four vedas were recorded in the Muktikā Upaniṣad. Of which thirteen Upaniṣads were considered to be primary Upaniṣads which are Īśa, Kena, Kaṭha, Aitareya, Taittirīya, Munḍaka, Chāndogya, Brhadāranyaka, Mānḍukya, Praśna, Śvetāśvatara, Maitri and Kauśītaki. These thirteen Upaniṣads are cited by Śaṅkara in his Prasthāna Traya commentaries and also ten of which were commented by him.

The word Upaniṣad etymologically has been defined as 'upa' (the closest), 'ni' (certitude) and 'ṣad' (severance), which means 'The certain knowledge about the closest reality (Self) that severs sorrow' (K.U.B intro). Sadānanda stated that what is called as Vedānta is the Knowledge gained through the Upaniṣads (V.S.). Deussen (1966) categorises the knowledge contained in the Upaniṣads to be about Brahman, Universe, Self and the means to Mokṣa.

The nature of Brahman as taught by Upaniṣads comprise of the following definitions among many others:

> All these have Consciousness as the giver of their reality; all these are impelled by Consciousness; the universe has Consciousness as its eye and Consciousness is its end. Consciousness is Brahman. (A.U. 3.1.3)
>
> That Brahman is without prior or posterior, without interior or exterior. This self, the perceiver of everything, is Brahman. This is the teaching. (B.U. 2.5.19)
>
> 'That infinite alone is below. That is above. That is behind. That is in front. That is to the south. That is to the north. That alone is all this. So next is the teaching in regard to the self-sense. I alone am below. I am above. I am behind. I am in front. I am to the south. I am to the north. I alone am all this. (C.U. 7.25.1)
>
> The knower of Brahman attains the highest. Here is a verse uttering that very fact: "Brahman is truth, knowledge, and infinite. He who knows that Brahman as existing in the intellect, lodged in the supreme space in the heart, enjoys, as identified with the all- knowing Brahman, all desirable things simultaneously. (T.U. 2.1.1.)

The 16th instruction is the beginning of the Jñāna Yoga which constitutes three processes which are Śravaṇa-Manana-Nididhyāsana. This triple means has been presented in the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad (B.U. 1.4.2) This instruction to 'listen attentively' indicates śravaṇa, listening. The act of śravaṇa takes place with respect to the inquiry made by the seeker (15th instruction). The purpose of śravaṇa is for gaining knowledge (A.P. 6.49).

Śaṅkara has also presented the ideal dialogue between the seeker and the guru (U.S. 1.1.1-111). The response by the guru to the question placed by the seeker will be based on teachings of the Upaniṣads. The knowledge of Brahman is indeed revealed by the Upaniṣads as that is its purpose. The Upaniṣads reveal one more fact, which is the Self being of the same as Brahman.

The need for attentive listening is that this is the sole means to Mokṣa, that which the seeker is seeking right from his Vānaprastha Āśrama. What is taught by the teacher will be the equation of the Atman with the Akṣaram Brahman.

3.17. Seeing the Meaning of the Upaniṣad Statements

vākyārthaśca vicāryatāṃ
May you enquire properly by seeing the meaning of the Śruti Vākyas.

Here is the beginning of the 2nd process of Jñāna Yoga, which is manana. Manana is defined by Vidyāranya as the removal of doubts (A.P. 6.49). While listening to the guru's teachings one should strive to see the intended meaning of the Upaniṣad Vākyas as taught by the teacher. The vākyas implied here are specifically from the Upaniṣads that teach the identity between Brahman and the Self. Here is a list of such vākyas:

- Tat Tvam Asi (Chāndogya Upaniṣad) - That You Are
- Ayam ātma Brahma (Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad) - This Self is Brahman
- Prajñānam Brahma (Aitareya Upaniṣad) - Consciousness is Brahman
- Aham Brahmāsmi (Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad) - I am Brahman
- Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma (Chāndogya Upaniṣad) - All is certainly Brahman

Once the equation between Brahman and Self is properly understood, one attains Mokṣa. The principle of Upaniṣads is that Śravaṇam itself has the capacity to confer this Mokṣa if the seeker is adequately prepared (C.U.B. 8.9.3). Such a seeker is called an Uttama Adhikāri (most qualified aspirant) while the others are who are not as purified would have to conduct Manana repeatedly and Nididhyāsana thereafter. Hence the Upaniṣad knowledge have the direct ability to confer Mokṣa. This potency of the Upaniṣad teachings is called Aparokṣa Jñāna, Immediate knowledge.

In the process of Manana, the literal meaning of the vākyas should be disregarded and the implied meaning is assimilated. Of course, the role of the teacher would be to unfold this to the seeker. Therefore, the intended purpose of this instruction is to enquire to look at the intended meaning only (T.B.).

3.18. Reasoning with Clear Intention

śrutiśiraḥpakśaḥ samāśrīyatāṃ
May you keep with the intention of the Upaniṣads.

While striving to understand the meaning of the Vākyas, one must be keep the overall vision (tātparya) of the Upaniṣads at all times. Śaṅkara has stated that Viveka or discriminative inquiry should be conducted keeping to the Śruti and one's reasoning capability (S.V.S.S.S. 21; B.U.B. 2.4.11). The reason for this instruction is that the Upaniṣads not only have statements that directly indicate the identity between Self and Brahman, which are called Abheda Vākyas (statements of identity), but also has other statements which may be subservient to these Abheda vākyas. Therefore, one should be able to put all teachings in the Upaniṣads in a coherent manner such that the intention of the Upaniṣad which is to teach identity of Brahman and Self is not missed. This process of placing the random teachings of the Upaniṣads in a consistent manner is called Samanvaya. Śaṅkara has elaborated the process of Samanvaya by clearly stating that the Upaniṣad teachings can be reconciled to present a harmonious whole (B.S.B 1.1.4).

3.19. Avoiding Unproductive Reasoning

dustarkātsuviramyatāṃ
May you avoid the fallacious reasoning.

While looking at the Upaniṣads or Vedānta in such a manner, one should avoid wrong reasoning and methods when logically analyzing the Upaniṣad vākyas with the intention of the Vedānta. Wrong methods can come from two directions:

1. One could be from one's own false or erroneous logic.

2. The other could be the teachings of other philosophies which may rely solely on logic and reasoning to arrive at the intention of Upaniṣads to show that its intention is to teach difference between Brahman and Self.

The first admonition comes from Śaṅkara where he states that logic is limited (C.U.B. 6.2.4) and that logicians are wrong (B.U.B. 2.1.20) and that vain reasoning in useless (B.S.B. 2.1.11). Therefore, one should always keep to the logic and methods given by the Guru and the Upaniṣads when conducting manana on the teaching. It would also mean that one should also not form one's conclusions independent of tradition and scriptures.

3.20. Reasoning along with the Vedas

śrutimatastarko'nusandhīyatām
May you reason along with the śruti.

Here is a word of caution and advice that a seeker must keep his logic with the intention of the Śruti's teachings and not contrary to what is intended. Śruti being the means of knowledge for Self-knowledge, one should resort to the śruti for knowing oneself. The Śruti may give the logic for reasoning at times. At other times, according to Śaṅkara one should resort to the tradition and the Guru for right logic and reasoning (B.U.B. 2.4.11).

Here the logic must not be blind acceptance. It is in the Vedānta tradition that one should use the triple means of Vedas, Reasoning and Self-experience to see the truth of any given statement (P. 6.56). Here one can see the value for Yukti where one uses logic to verify the teachings of the Śruti. This is supported by Śaṅkara's grand-teacher, Gauḍapāda (M.K. 3.1). While conducting the analysis the seeker may have doubts and confusion. These should be clarified immediately in a proper manner.

The Śruti too gives a number of methodologies to do the vicāra or enquiry. These are called prakriyās. Here is a list of prakriyās and its explanation:

1. Adhyāropa Apavāda - This is considered the principal prakriyā by some authors (Nikhilananda, 1982; V.S. 31; S.S. 1.67). Adhyāropa Apavāda means "Negation of the Superimposition". A popular illustration would be the traditional snake and rope metaphor. When someone sees a rope in a dark alley, he mistakes it to be a snake. Hence the illusory snake has been superimposed on the rope. The rope is the Self, while the snake is the identification with the body-sense-mind complex and the darkness is ignorance. The whole purpose of the Upaniṣads is to negate the superimposition through right knowledge. Śaṅkara talks about this in his Commentaries (B.S.B Introduction; B.U.B. 4.4.25).

2. Pañcakoṣa Prakriyā - This method of reasoning is found in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad. The Upaniṣad states that there are five sheaths to the individual and each of the sheaths would have to be negated to know that the Self which is beyond these five sheaths. The five sheaths have been elaborated in the Tattva Bodha as follows:

    - Annamaya Koṣa - This is the physical body made up of essence of food.

    - Prānamaya Koṣa - This is the physiological aspect of the body which comprises of the five prānas (prāna, apāna, vyāna, udāna and samāna) and five organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, anus and genitals).

    - Manomaya Koṣa - This is the sheath of emotions and the five sensory organs. In this sheath, the mind involuntarily responds to objects of perception with emotions that are negative, neutral or positive. This is one of the strongest sheaths as emotions are very strong and potent. The five sensory organs are sight, taste, sound, touch and smell.

- Vijñānamaya Koṣa - This is the sheath of the Intellect and five sensory organs. At this level, the mind makes decisions based on the sensory perception.

- ānandamaya Koṣa - This is the sheath of happiness and it drives us in the search to be happy. Every individual is striving to be happy by its force without any choice over it. It is also considered to be the sheath of ignorance.

3. Avasthātraya Prakriyā - This method of reasoning is found in the Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad. The Self is seen as undergoing three states of experience. The first being the waking state where the mind and sensory organs are engaged. The second state is the dream state where the mind is active without the sensory organ perception. The third state is the deep sleep state where the mind and sensory organs are totally absent and we are happily asleep. There is a fourth state called Turīya or the Self which pervades the three states. The method of reasoning employed here is to see the Self as the witness of the three states while experiencing them.

4. Śarīratraya Prakriyā - This method can be found in Śaṅkara's Tattva Bodha and other Vedānta texts. This individual is understood to be possessing of three bodies. The first is the physical body. The second is the subtle body and the third is a causal body. The three bodies are related to the pañcakoṣa in the following way:

   - Physical body - this is the same as Annamaya Koṣa. This body is experienced in the current birth.

   - Subtle Body - This comprises of the Prānamaya, Manomaya and Vijñānamaya koṣas. This body detaches itself at death and goes to other realms to experience the results of its deeds. This is the same body that enters into another womb when a child is conceived.

   - Causal Body - This comprises of the ānandamaya Koṣa. This body causes the other two bodies by the sheer force of the desire for happiness.

5. Anvaya Vyatireka Prakriyā - This method is called 'dependent and independent reality' and can be found in a few Upaniṣads like the Kaṭha and Muṇḍaka Upaniṣads. In this method realities are shown to be dependent on Brahman but Brahman being existent without the realities. A simple illustration is 'water and waves'. Although waves depend on water for its existence, the water does not depend on the waves for its existence.

6. Neti Neti Prakriyā - This method is found in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad where anything that has a name and form is negated to see what's left and that is Brahman.

7. Kārana Kārya Prakriyā - This method is one of cause and effect. The effect is seen to be not separate from the cause. The Upaniṣads are said to be teaching that the effect is seen as an apparent modification of the cause, sometimes also called Vivartavāda (Comans, 2000, p.356).

Once the error free knowledge is established the process and purpose of manana are complete. Some seekers may attain Mokṣa even at this stage.

3.21. Meditation

brahmāsmīti vibhāvyatām
May you dwell upon on the knowledge 'I am brahman'.

The instruction introduces the third process which is Nididhyāsana. The error-free knowledge of the Self has to be established as oneself. Vidyāranya defines Nididhyāsana as the process that eliminates opposing tendencies through meditation (A.P. 6.49). In Nididhyāsana, one finally identifies the Self with Brahman. So far the seeker was only removing doubts and misconceptions

in Manana. But Brahman that has been understood as the Self could still be an object in his mind like many other concepts. So here in Nididhyāsana the aspirant finally sees that 'He' is indeed that Self which is Brahman. All efforts may end here for some seekers. This is sufficient for him/her to be established in the Self. But not so for the seekers who are not as qualified. While conducting Nididhyāsana, the samskāras may pose as obstacles for him. The cause of this could be the values one cultivated in the life of Pravrtti Mārga which has become impressions that sway the mind from Nididhyāsana. These are also opposite tendencies that may impede the assimilation of knowledge such as Vāsanās. Vidyāranya defines the Vāsanās to be of three types (J.V):

1. Deha Vāsanā - Strong identifications with the body such as notions of beauty, strength, vanity, birth, family lineage etc.

2. Śāstra Vāsanā - Strong identifications with scriptural knowledge and over dependence on it.

3. Loka Vāsanā - Strong identification with how people of the world look at the aspirant

The next set of instructions are directed at countering the effects of the three vāsanās.

3.22. Giving Up Pride

aharahargarvaḥ parityajyatāṃ
May you give up pride.

The sense of pride to be given up in Nididhyāsana is the 22nd instruction. Pride may arise due to the samskāras. Sometimes these could also pertain to having a high birth, or being a pundit or even being perceived as a famous spiritual aspirant. One could also become conceited when knowing oneself to be everything i.e. Brahman. This happens primarily because of the pride in knowing this highest knowledge when compared with the lower knowledge that people of the Pravrtti Mārga seek. These are also great lessons for many seekers as one can get caught up with the notion that one is great and better than the rest of the people. Such ideas about oneself only creates the attachment to what is not real or what is not one's intrinsic nature. Such ideas are to be dropped in the seat of Nididhyāsana. The story of Dharmavyādha in Mahābhārata is one such episode that warns seekers not to get proud over their spiritual accomplishments. Such admonitions are also found in the Bhagavad Gītā:

> The wise ones who are free from pride and non-discrimination, who have cornered the evil of association, who are ever devoted to spirituality, completely free from desires, free from the dualities called happiness and sorrow, reach that undecaying State. (15.05)
>
> Vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, freedom from malice, absence of haughtiness (pride) - these, O scion of the harata dynasty, are (the alties) of one born destined to have the divine nature.(16.03)
>
> (That person,) having discarded egotism, force, pride, desire, anger and superfluous possessions, free from the idea of possession, and serene, is fit for becoming Brahman. (18.53)

3.23. Removal of Bodily Identification

dehe'hammatirujjhyatāṃ
May you consciously remove the "I" notion from the body.

Pride is rooted in the ego which notionally owns the body-sense-mind complex. This is an effect of Deha Vāsanā. The ego identifies itself with the many constituents of the body. This can be analysed using the Pañcakoṣa prakriyā. The ego can identify itself with any of the sheaths starting from the body. At times this is called Adhyāsa, superimposition. A list of identifications that can take place at each of the five sheaths can befound in Figure 1.

Koṣas	Identifications
Annamaya	I am the body. I am short or tall. I am ugly or beautiful. I am fat or thin.
Pranamaya	I am healthy or unhealthy. I am hungry or full I am walking. I am flexing my arms. I am excreting or having sex.
Manomaya	I am unsure. I am happy or sad. I am jeaouse or hateful. I am ethusisatsic I am listening. I am tasting. I am smelling. I am feeling I am seeing.
Vijñānamaya	I am right or wrong. I am intelligent or stupid.
Anandamaya	I need happiness. I am a seeker of happiness.

Figure 1. Identifications with Five Sheaths

A simple look at the various identifications can tell us that a person cannot be having so many different identities. But one should understand everything could be objectified from the ego to the body in one word - false. This is one of the primary obstacles in Nididhyāsana and this has to be removed in nididhyāsana. In fact all of these identifications stand in the way of seeing oneself as Brahman. Kṛṣṇa advocates the subjugation of the ego in the following verses:

> (That person,) having discarded egotism, force, pride, desire, anger and superfluous possessions, free from the idea of possession, and serene, is fit for becoming Brahman. (B.G. 18.53)
>
> Non-attachment with regard to objects of the senses, and also absence of egotism; seeing the evil in birth, death, old age, diseases and miseries; (B.G.13.9)
>
> The branches of that (Tree), extending down-wards and upwards, are strengthened by the qualities and have sense-objects as their shoots. And the roots, which are followed by actions, spread down-wards in the human world (B.G.15.02)

3.24. Staying Away for Arguments

budhajanairvādaḥ parityajyatām
May you not argue with the learned and ignorant people.

While conducting Nididhyāsana, one should not have disputations with the learned and the ignorant. This may unsettle one's understanding before one has fully assimilated Self-knowledge. Therefore, one should keep away from argumentation with others when conducting nididhyāsana, as this will only give reality to the world through the force of one's emotions. Most arguments are filled with an emotional thrust and the need to win an argument is very much there for most of us. Hence arguments reinforce the ego and further compel the need to be right. The need to be right can also be a problem to one's Sādhana as it is only the ego rearing its ugly head. And arguments

can also mislead us to think that that person who argues the best is always right. This is not the case with the Self-knowledge. One of the meditation verses to Śaṅkara's Dakṣināmurti Stotram is:

> I propitiate that Dakṣināmurti, who is the Transcendental Absolute declared by an eloquence called Silence, who is a youth, who is the best of the Gurus surrounded by great disciples who are themselves firmly rooted in Brahman, who is the prince among preceptors, who shows by his hand the cinmudrā, who is Bliss personified, who revels in His own Self and who always radiates happiness.

Here Dakṣināmurti is viewed as the teacher of Self-knowledge using a cinmudrā which is a symbol of Tat Tvam Asi and he is teaching in silence. This is the key point in our case where the teaching takes place in silence. This shows that Self-knowledge is better assimilated in silence rather than noisy discussions and debates. These arguments are like ripples in the water that does not allow one to see the riverbed clearly.

The learned, pundits, are people who are skilled in scriptures. When arguing with them, they may quote a hundred statements from different scriptures to prove their point. A seeker may not be able to respond likewise and hence may create the feeling that he or she is small and that more learning is required. Hence, instead of meditating on the Self, the seeker may feel that his knowledge is insufficient after engaging in arguments and debates.

On the other hand, the ignorant may be doing karmas all their lives and they may not know the value of Self knowledge. Arguing with them may bring discussions to the world of transactions and hence will distract the mind to sensory experience rather than subjective meditations. The Kaṭha Upaniṣad reiterates the same point:

> This (knowledge of the Self) attained by thee cannot be had through argumentation. O dearest, this doctrine, only if taught by some teacher (other than a logician), leads to right knowledge. O, thou art rooted in truth. May a questioner be ever like thee, O Nachiketas. (K.U. 1.2.9)

3.25. Overcoming Hunger

kṣudvyādhiśca cikitsyatāṃ
Cure the disease of hunger

One of the challenges for the Nididhyāsana, especially so for the Sannyāsins, is hunger. Hunger constantly reminds us of the body sense and is a genuine physical need. In fact hunger is the only need for the body. Everything else is a want and therefore, this has to be managed wisely. In fact this is the only malady a Sannyāsin will suffer from that will give reality to the world he is trying to sublate in his Nididhyāsana. However, he still has to eat and appease hunger. So this is the only desire that would bring the notion of the body as being oneself. Therefore, this hunger has to be allayed with the right attitude. Traditionally, specific instructions for a Sannyāsin has been laid with regards to eating food such as the frequency for taking meals, the means of acquiring food and the volume to be consumed.

3.26. Begging for Food

pratidinaṃ bhikśauṣadhaṃ bhujyatāṃ
Swallow daily the medicine in the form of alms

To cure this disease of hunger stated in the previous instruction, one should resort to bhikṣā which is begging for food. This bhikṣā is limited consumption of food necessary to appease the hunger which is the ned of the body. In some texts it is stated that one should take only eight morsels of food (Olivelle, 1992). Eating more than necessary will not allow an aspirant to meditate peacefully.

Kṛṣṇa promotes the consumption of wholesome food which is called Sāttvika food, defined as:

> Foods that augment life, firmness of mind, strength, health, happiness and delight, and which are succulent, oleaginous, substantial and agreeable, are dear to one endowed with sattva. (B.G.17.08)

Therefore, bhikṣā helps to take away the notion of body as one has to eat what is given or mandated.

3.27. Not Seeking Tasty Food

svādvannaṃ na tu yācyatāṃ
Do not beg for tasty food.

While begging for food, one should not look for tasty food. The difference between bhikṣā and food consumed by anyone else is in the choice. Over what is eaten one has choices but in bhikṣā, there is no choice. One has to accept what is given and has to consume it. The Sannyāsin has to “Subsist on food which is unexpected” (N.U. 22). Two points to note in this instruction:

1. Choice - One should not exercise choice over the type of food begged or the people from whom it is given. There could be this habit to choose a particular type of food or people from a particular community. All these preferences are to be eschewed.

2. Taste - One should not have preference over one food over the other with regard to taste. Therefore, the attitude of acceptance with regards to what comes as food has to be there. Eating whatever the taste may be is a very important discipline for a sannyāsin.

3.28. Cultivating Contentment

vidhivaśāt prāptena santuṣyatām
Be satisfied with what you get.

Hence a Sannyāsin may get anything based on the quality and quantity when he or she begs, so this instruction states that one should accept gracefully whatever falls into the begging bowl. This is the culmination of the instructions starting from the 26th instruction. Therefore, one should develop contentment with what comes by, seeing it to be what is destined to be received.

3.29. Endurance of Extremes

śītoṣṇādi viṣahyatāṃ
May you endure cold and heat.

Again the Samskāras may become an obstacle by seeking comforts. So, the samskāras may suggest you to seek comforts while conducting Nididhyāsana and it is the nature of the body to do so. This tendency again brings the mind to level of the body consciousness. So a seeker should develop indifference to the environment. One should be able to endure opposites such as cold and heat, pleasure and pain, desirable and undesirable.

This means that a Sannyāsin should not make plans to avoid such situations. He should live in the present and accept whatever comes gracefully. The weather and climate should not be a concern for him or her. Even pleasure and pain should not be the prime factor in making decisions. As the Upaniṣad says,

> Different is (that which is) preferable; and different, indeed, is the pleasurable. These two, serving different purposes, blind man. Good accrues to him who, of these two, chooses the preferable. He who chooses the pleasurable falls from the goal. (K.U. 1.2.1)

Hence the seeker should always keep his mind on the preferable (śreyas) and hence not missing the goal of his Sādhanas.

3.30. Avoiding Useless Talks

na tu vṛthā vākyaṃ samuccāryatāṃ
Do not indulge in useless talks.

This instruction is to reduce speech and the unnecessary use of the organ of speech. It is known that speech is preceded by thoughts. And hence the talks that are not related to Self-knowledge are counterproductive to Nididhyāsanam. Hence, one should not indulge in any talks other than the subject of Self-knowledge. In fact silence and contemplation should be the preoccupation for the seeker at this stage. Useless talks take the mind away from establishing oneself as Brahman. Excessive interaction with people creates opportunities for small talk, gossips and other unwholesome conversations. Hence reducing one's interactions with the world will help one to reduce such conversations. One of the values of Sannyāsa is its ability to keep away from people and society. Kṛṣṇa also states "adhyatma jñāna nityatvam - constant reflection of Self-knowledge" as the facilitating factor in the assimilation of knowledge (B.G. 8.12).

3.31. Developing Indifference

audāsīnyamabhīpsyatāṃ
Develop indifference.

This instruction is also called samacittatvam or samatva buddhi. Kṛṣṇa states this attitude beautifully as follows:

> The learned ones look with equanimity on a Brahmana endowed with learning and humility, a cow, an elephant and even a dog as well as an eater of dog's meat. (B.G. 5.18)
>
> One who has his mind Self-absorbed through Yoga, and who has the vision of sameness every-where, see this Self existing in everything, and every-thing in his Self. (B.G. 6.29)

One should remain indifferent to distinction of all classes; both human and objects. One should always be impartial. One should not develop or continue the attachment to even Dharma. Importance to distinctions will drag the mind to the reality of the world which one is trying to negate in Nididhyāsanam.

3.32. Handling Insults and Praises

janakṛpānaiṣṭhuryamutsṛjyatām
May you not be carried away
by the praises and insults received from people.

People may praise the seeker for having no pride, for having begged for food, for having no value for comforts, for not talking unnecessarily or for developing indifference. On the contrary the people of the world may even insult you for having the above qualities or for being different from the rest. So, one should be able to handle praise and censure with indifference.

Doing the opposite would indicate the value and attachment one has for the body-sense-mind complex. So one should not give importance to insults and praises while conducting Nididhyāsana. Both insults and praises only pertain to the body-sense-mind complex which one is trying to negate.

3.33. Being in Solitude

ekānte sukhamāsyatāṃ
Live joyously in solitude.

To help one in meditation, one should live in Solitude as it is important to a seeker. Kṛṣṇa states the ideal conditions for Nididhyāsana as follows:

> A yogi should constantly concentrate his mind by staying in a solitary place, alone, with mind and body controlled, free from expectations, (and) free from acquisition.. (B.G. 6.10)

> Holding the body, head and neck erect and still, being steady, looking at the tip of his own nose-and not looking around; He should remain seated with a placid mind, free from fear, firm in the vow of a celibate, and with the mind fixed on Me by controlling it through concentration, having Me as the supreme Goal.(B.G. 6.13-14)

Śaṅkara comments that Nididhyāsana has to be done in a place where it is quiet naturally or to create such a place (B.G.B. 6.11). Hence, solitude is the best friend for the one conducting Nididhyāsana. It helps the person to stay away from distractions and focus on Nididhyāsana.

Another interpretation of this word is being itinerant by traveling alone, not taking residence at any one place. This practice is called parivrāja.

3.34. Concentrating on Brahman

paratare cetaḥ samādhīyatāṃ
Concentrate the mind on Brahman.

In solitude, one should meditate on Brahman which is none other than the Self. This indicates the unbroken thought to see the Self as the Imperishable Brahman which is also Nididhyāsana or also sometimes called Samādhi. The meditation here is the constant effort to equate the Self to Brahman as convinced in the process of Manana.

In Vedānta there are two types of Samādhi which are Savikalpa Samādhi and Nirvikalpa Samādhi (D.D.V, 23). These are not to be mistaken with the Samprajñāta and Asamprajñāta Samādhi of the Yoga Sūtras. The practice of Savikalpa Samādhi leads to Nirvikalpa Samādhi (Tejomayananda, 1994). Savikalpa Samādhi is a practice using various means to establish oneself on Brahman as the Self. Hence Savikalpa Samādhi is indeed Nididhyāsanam. And Nirvikalpa Samādhi is reaching a state of error free knowledge and being established in the self.

3.35. Seeing the Self as Infinite

pūrṇātmā susamīkṣyatāṃ
May you perceive the Self as Infinite.

In the constant stream of thoughts called Savikalpa Samādhi, one should be able to see the Self as infinite, pūrnam. The word ‘infinite’ or pūrṇam is also technical jargon and revealed in the famous Pūrṇamadah Pūrṇamidam mantra in the Upaniṣads as,

> That (Brahman) is infinite, and this (universe) is infinite. The infinite proceeds from the infinite. (Then) taking the infinitude of the infinite (universe), it remains as the infinite (Brahman) alone. (B.U. 5.1.1)

Śaṅkara explains in his commentary to this verse that Brahman having become the universe does not lose its infinitude just as the Self conditioned by the body-sense-mind complex does not lose its Brahman nature as Infinity (B.U.B. 5.1.1).

3.36. Resolving the Universe

jagadidaṃ tadbādhitaṃ dṛśyatāṃ
See the Universe negated by the Infinitude of the Self

While putting effort to see the infinitude of the Self, the universe gets resolved in the Self. This is stated in Upaniṣad as when duality is resolved, one does not see a second thing (B.U. 2.4.14). The whole premise of the Upaniṣads is Advaita which means only One reality, Brahman or Atman, pervading the universe. This method is presented by Śaṅkara as,

> One should verily see the cause in the effect, and then dismiss the effect altogether. What then remains, the sage himself becomes. (A.A. 139)

This is understood better with the kārana kārya prakriyā where the effect is understood as not different from the cause. The Munḍaka Upaniṣad states,

> As a spider spreads out and withdraws (its thread), as on the earth grow the herbs (and trees), and as from a living man issues out hair (on the head and body), so out of the Imperishable does the Universe emerge here (in this phenomenal creation). (M.U. 1.1.7)

The Munḍaka Upaniṣad verse above states that the material cause of the universe is Brahman. The illustration of the spider and its thread indicates that the universe is created, sustained and dissolved into Brahman like the way the thread extends from the spider and gets withdrawn into it once the purpose of the thread is over. The illustration of the earth is to show that trees and plants emerge out of the land and hence it indicates that one depends on the other for its creation. The illustration of the living man is to show that the Brahman is not inert but a sentient being.

From the understanding that the universe has always been Brahman, the idea that this Brahman is the Self has been established by the mahāvākyas cited earlier. With this appreciation, the understanding of the Self can be refined by the words of the Kaṭha Upaniṣad,

> The intelligent Self is not born, nor does It die. It did not come from anywhere, nor did anything come from It. It is unborn, eternal, everlasting and ancient, and is not slain even when the body is slain. (K.U. 1.2.18)

The key message of this verse in the context of the 36th instruction is “nor did anything come from It”. By making this statement it is a conclusion that even the Universe did not come from the Self or Brahman. This is what is meant when the text states that universe gets sublated in the process of knowing the Self. The Self or Brahman is known to be existent before, during and after the creation like the way a pot was clay before, during and after it has been destroyed. As the Chāndogya Upaniṣad states;

> ‘Dear boy, just as through a single clod of clay all that is made of clay would become known, for all modifications is but name based upon words and the clay alone is real; (C.U. 6.1.4)
>
> Dear boy, just as through a single ingot of gold, all that is made of gold would become known, for all modification is but name based upon words and the gold alone is real; (C.U. 6.1.5)

The Aṣṭāvakra Gītā also supports this conclusion:

> From ignorance of oneself, the world appears, and by knowledge of oneself it appears no longer. From ignorance of the rope it appears to be a snake, and by knowledge of it it does so no longer. (A.G. 7)

The Bhagavad Gītā further states,

> This whole world is pervaded by Me in My unmanifest form. All beings exist in Me, but I am not contained in them! Nor do the beings dwell in Me. Behold My divine Yoga! I am the sustainer and originator of beings, but My Self is not contained in the beings. (B.G. 9.4-5)

Hence the final step in Nididhyāsana is to resolve the universe into the self through a proper understanding of Brahman as the Self. Once the Self is seen as Brahman, the universe does not disappear from perception. This is the reason why Jīvanmuktas continue to live in the world conducting transactions like teaching etc. The Jīvanmuktas do see the universe but they do not see it as separate from the Self. Hence the Universe vanishes from their vision like the way the idea of a pot vanishes when one sees it as clay. The Aṣṭāvakra Gītā states;

> All this, which has originated out of me, is resolved back into me too, like a jug back into clay, a wave into water, and a bracelet into gold. (A.G. 2.10)

3.37. Destroying Previous Karmas

prākkarma pravilāpyatāṃ
May you destroy your sancita karma.

The Vedic scriptures like the Tattva Bodha talk about the three types of karmas centred on an individual which are āgāmi, sancita and prārabdha. The Sādhana Pañcakaṃ takes on each of the karmas and contextualises it in the discussion of a Jīvanmukta.

Prākarma refers to the actions done previously. They are the sum total of actions done since countless lives not remembered. These karmas are called Sancita karmas. The Tattva Bodha defines Sancita karma as,

> The results of actions performed in (all) previous births which are in the seed form and giving rise to endless crores of birth (in future) are called sancita (accumulated) karma. (T.B)

The Tattva Bodha further states that,

> Sancita karma is destroyed by the firm knowledge, 'I am Brahman alone'. (T.B)

Hence while conducting Nididhyāsana one need not care about one's past actions as that too is part of the world that has been negated. Hence, Sancita karma is destroyed by the dawn of knowledge of 'I am Brahman'. One would not have consideration for these karmas born out of ignorance. In fact one will not get bothered by the notion itself as it has been destroyed by Self-knowledge.

3.38. Disassociation with Current Karmas

citibalānnāpyuttaraiḥ śliṣyatāṃ
May you not be associated with āgāmi karmas.

This instruction handles the actions of the current birth. These are called Āgāmi karmas. The Tattva Bodha defines it as,

> The results of actions, good or bad performed by the body of the realised soul (Jīvanmukta) after the dawn of the knowledge is known as āgāmi. (T.B.)

After the dawn of Self-knowledge, the Jīvanmukta's life does not end. He continues to live as before but just that his worldview is now different from before. He sees the universe and his body-sense-mind complex but he has not mistaken it to be his Self. While living he performs actions of various kinds, both mundane and spiritual. Hence the name 'Jīvanmukta' which means 'liberated while living'. The Tattva bodha further states that,

> The āgāmi karma is also destroyed by knowledge and the wise man is not affected by it, as a lotus leaf is not affected by the water on it. (T.B.)

This same idea is found in the Upaniṣad,

> Just as water does not cling to the lotus-leaf, so also sin does not cling to him who knows Brahman thus'. (C.U. 4.14.3)

At the dawn of the knowledge, the āgāmi karmas are destroyed. To appreciate this one needs to appreciate the mechanics of karma. Karma which literally means action depends on a few causes. Kṛṣṇa states,

> O mighty-armed one, learned from Me these five factors for the accomplishment of all actions, which have been spoken of in the Vedanta in which actions terminate. The locus as also the agent (ego), the different kinds of organs, the many and distinct activities, and, the divine is here the fifth. (B.G.18.13-14)

> Knowledge, the object of knowledge and the knower-this is the threefold inducement to action. The comprehension of actions comes under three heads-the instruments, the object and the subject. (B.G. 18.18)

In summary, the five factors are 1. The seat of action, 2. the ego, 3. five organs of action + mind, 4. change in states or movements & 5. grace of deities. Therefore for an action to happen, all the five causes must be present. In the case of a Jīvanmukta, his ego gets sublated due to his Self-Knowledge. Hence the sense of doer-ship is not present anymore in the Jīvanmukta. And neither is there a sense of right and wrong as Śaṅkara states,

> Neither am I mind, nor intelligence ,
> Nor ego, nor thought,
> Nor am I ears or the tongue or the nose or the eyes,
> Nor am I earth or sky or air or the light,
> I am Shiva, I am Shiva, of nature knowledge and bliss (N.Sh.1)
>
> I never do have enmity or friendship,
> Neither do I have vigour nor feeling of competition,
> Neither do I have assets, or money or passion or salvation,
> I am Shiva, I am Shiva, of nature knowledge and bliss (N.Sh.3)

But actionless action continues to be there in the Jīvanmukta but in his view he is not a doer but the sense of doing is attributed to nature or prakrti. Kṛṣṇa says

> While actions are being done in every way by the gunas (qualities) of Nature, one who is deluded by egoism thinks thus: 'I am the doer.' (B.G. 3.27)
>
> The Self does not create agentship or any objects (of desire) for anyone; nor association with the results of actions. But it is Nature that acts.(B.G. 5.14)

In his Bhagavad Gītā commentary Śaṅkara stated that a Jīvanmukta does not have a sense of agency although others may impute it on him (B.G.B. 4.22).

This is how the āgāmi karmas gets disassociated from the Jīvanmukta as stated as the 38th instruction. Sureśvara, the disciple of Śaṅkara anticipates a valid argument for this view and answers it as follows,

> If the enlightened man could behave as he liked what would be the difference between a sage and a dog? Both of them would eat impure things. Why does he not behave as he likes? Because Ignorance results from unrighteous deed; uncontrolled behaviour from ignorance. How can there be righteous deeds in the case of the one who by acting righteously has already gone beyond the plane of righteousness? (N.S. 4.62-63)

Sureśvara's question is a valid one especially when the Jīvanmukta has lost his sense of right and wrong due to the renunciation of karmas and also due to knowing that Brahman or Self is beyond Dharma. However, he makes a pertinent observation that a Jīvanmukta is not likely to commit wrong actions because he had spent his life prior to the dawn of knowledge in doing right actions according to Dharma. And hence the sense of righteousness would have become his vāsanās and samskāras. Even after gaining Self-knowledge he will continue to only live his life in Dharma. In other words, his āgāmi karmas will still be in abidance to Dharma naturally and not by his choice.

3.39. Living through Karmas that have Fructified

prārabdhaṃ tviha bhujyatāṃ
Go through your prārabdha.

Instead of expecting the Jīvanmukta to do something as the next instruction, the text instructs him to experience through Prārabdha Karma. Śaṅkara defines Prārabdha Karma as,

> Having given birth to this body, the actions which give result in this very world in the form of happiness and misery and which can be destroyed only by enjoying or suffering them is called prārabdha karma. (T.B)

According to the Vedānta tradition, prārabdha karma is something that cannot be defeated or overcome. The only way out is to experience it. This is the reason why famous Jīvanmuktas like Ramakṛishṇa, Ramana Maharishi, Nisargadatta Maharaj, Swami Vivekananda and others attained their end of life due to illnesses or terminal diseases. This shows that the force of karma that has caused the current body cannot be changed.

Śaṅkara states that between knowledge and prārabdha, the latter is stronger than the former (B.U.B. 1.4.7). Hence one should not underestimate the power of prārabdha. On the other hand Śaṅkara stated that Prārabdha Karma does not exist for the Jīvanmukta. In a string of verses, he refutes the theory of Prārabdha by giving some mind blowing arguments as follows,

> The theory one hears of from the scripture, that Prārabdha does not lose its hold upon one even after the origination of the knowledge of Atman, is now being refuted. After the origination of the knowledge of Reality, Prārabdha verily ceases to exist, inasmuch as the body and the like become non-existent; just as a dream does not exist on waking. That Karma which is done in a previous life is known as Prārabdha (which produces the present life). But such Karma cannot take the place of Prārabdha (for a man of knowledge), as he has no other birth (being free from ego). Just as the body in a dream is superimposed (and therefore illusory), so is also this body. How could there be any birth of the superimposed (body), and in the absence of birth (of the body) where is the room for that (i.e., Prārabdha) at all? The Vedānta texts declare ignorance to be verily the material (cause) of the phenomenal world just as earth is of a jar. That (ignorance) being destroyed, where can the universe subsist? Just as a person out of confusion perceives only the snake leaving aside the rope, so does an ignorant person see only the phenomenal world without knowing the reality. The real nature of the rope being known, the appearance of the snake no longer persists; so the substratum being known, the phenomenal world disappears completely. The body also being within the phenomenal world (and therefore unreal), how could Prārabdha exist? It is, therefore, for the understanding of the ignorant alone that the Śruti speaks of Prārabdha. "And all the actions of a man perish when he realizes that (Atman) which is both the higher and the lower". Here the clear use of the plural by the Śruti is to negate Prārabdha as well. If the ignorant still arbitrarily maintain this, they will not only involve themselves into two absurdities but will also run the risk of forgoing the Vedantic conclusion. So one should accept those Śrutis alone from which proceeds true knowledge. (A.A. 90-99)

From the discussion, one can conclude that Prārabdha karma exists only as a theory to justify the experience of onlookers with regard to the actions and behaviours of a Jīvanmukta after attaining Mokṣa. However from the Jīvanmukta's standpoint, there is no prārabdha for him.

3.40. Abidance in the Self

atha parabrahmātmanā sthīyatāṃ
May you abide in the Self as parabrahman.

The final instruction is to abide in that knowledge gained rather than talking about it. Abiding in the knowledge is very important as Śaṅkara has warned that sometimes emotions due to past experiences can derail him from his knowledge (B.U.B.1.4.10). Hence it is important to have a commitment to the knowledge in terms of always being exposed to it. This is the abidance that the final instruction is talking about. One way this is done is through teaching Self-knowledge to other aspirants. By doing that one can always keep in touch with one's Brahman nature and the knowledge.

Chapter 4
Conclusion

The commentary on Sādhana Pañcakaṃ has provided a glimpse into the consistency of the teaching tradition of Advaita Vedānta. The text is authentic in its exposition by it being coherent and consistent with Vedic scriptures. It has also shown the relevance of the text in modern times as the life of Sannyāsin is not confined to external Sannyāsa alone but internal Sannyāsa too. The teachings related to Sannyāsa can be easily converted and contextualised for those leading a life of Karma Yoga. This makes the teaching of Sādhana Pañcakaṃ relevant to seekers from all walks of life.

Om Tat Sat

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sādhana pañcakaṃ

vedo nityamadhīyatāṃ taduditaṃ karma svanuṣṭhīyatāṃ
teneśasya vidhīyatāmapacitiḥ kāmye matistyajyatām ı
pāpaughaḥ paridhūyatāṃ bhavasukhe doṣo'nusandhīyatā-
mātmecchā vyavasīyatāṃ nijagṛhāttūrṇaṃ vinirgamyatām ıı 1ıı

saṅgaḥ satsu vidhīyatāṃ bhagavato bhaktirdṛḍhā''dhīyatāṃ
śāntyādiḥ paricīyatāṃ dṛḍhataraṃ karmāśu santyajyatām ı
sadvidvānupasṛpyatāṃ pratidinaṃ tatpādukā sevyatāṃ
brahmaikākṣaramarthyatāṃ śrutiśirovākyaṃ samākarṇyatām ıı 2ıı

vākyārthaśca vicāryatāṃ śrutiśiraḥpakśaḥ samāśrīyatāṃ
dustarkātsuviramyatāṃ śrutimatastarko'nusandhīyatām ı
brahmāsmīti vibhāvyatāmaharahargarvaḥ parityajyatāṃ
dehe'hammatirujjhyatāṃ budhajanairvādaḥ parityajyatām ıı 3ıı

kṣudvyādhiśca cikitsyatāṃ pratidinaṃ bhikśauṣadhaṃ bhujyatāṃ
svādvannaṃ na tu yācyatāṃ vidhivaśāt prāptena santuṣyatām ı
śītoṣṇādi viṣahyatāṃ na tu vṛthā vākyaṃ samuccāryatā-
maudāsīnyamabhīpsyatāṃ janakṛpānaiṣṭhuryamutsṛjyatām ıı 4 ıı

ekānte sukhamāsyatāṃ paratare cetaḥ samādhīyatāṃ
pūrṇātmā susamīkṣyatāṃ jagadidaṃ tadbādhitaṃ dṛśyatām ı
prākkarma pravilāpyatāṃ citibalānnāpyuttaraiḥ śliṣyatāṃ
prārabdhaṃ tviha bhujyatāmatha parabrahmātmanā sthīyatām ıı 5ıı

ıı iti paramahaṃsaparivrājakācāryaśrīmacchaṅkarācāryaviracita
sādhana pañcakaṃ saṃpūrṇam ıı